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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: review of mainstreaming in the organizations of the United Nations system

Follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Report of the Secretary-General

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* E/CN.6/1998/1.
** See E/CN.6/1998/2/Add.1.
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I. Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1996/6 on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, established the work programme of the Commission on the Status of Women, in particular the items to be included on the agenda of the Commission. As regards documentation for the sessions of the Commission, the Council decided, *inter alia*, that under item 3 (a) of the Commission's agenda, a report of the Secretary-General on the measures taken and progress achieved in mainstreaming a gender perspective within the United Nations system should be prepared on an annual basis.

2. In its resolution 52/100 of 12 December 1997, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report annually to it, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council on follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Similar mandates were contained in General Assembly resolutions 51/69 and 50/203.

3. In each of the three reports submitted in the course of a year, the information that is most pertinent to the respective intergovernmental body is provided, in order to facilitate its decision-making. Thus the reports to the Commission on the Status of Women emphasize efforts undertaken by the Secretariat in support of mainstreaming a gender perspective and other follow-up activities. The report to the Economic and Social Council focus is on facilitating the coordination function of the Council. The report to the General Assembly contains information from all entities in the United Nations system, including specialized agencies and international financial institutions and an analysis of activities undertaken at the national level and by non-governmental organizations and civil society.

4. Section II of the present report has been prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution 52/100. It also fulfils the requirements of Commission on the Status of Women resolution 41/6 on gender mainstreaming. Section III responds to Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/16 on Palestinian women and Commission on the Status of Women resolution 41/1 on the release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflict and imprisoned. Details on the situation of Palestinian Women are contained in document E/CN.6/1998/2/Add.2.

5. In addition, the present report has an addendum (E/CN.6/1998/2/Add.1), containing a joint work plan for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women, as called for in Commission on the Status of Women resolution 39/5.

II. Progress in the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and in mainstreaming a gender perspective within the United Nations system

6. At its forty-second session, the Commission on the Status of Women will have an opportunity to make a more comprehensive assessment of progress achieved at different levels since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Although short updates on follow-up by Governments were included in previous reports under the item,[1] at the current session a synthesized report on national action plans and strategies has been prepared (E/CN.6/1998/6). Likewise, activities of the United Nations system in follow-up to the Platform for Action are assessed in detail in the mid-term report on the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women (E/CN.6/1998/3). The Commission will also consider options for a high-level plenary review to be conducted in the year 2000 (E/CN.6/1998/10). The present report is intended to complement those reports.

A. General Assembly and Economic and Social Council

1. General Assembly at its fifty-second session

7. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/52/281) focused on system-wide gender mainstreaming and on agreed conclusions 1997/2, on gender mainstreaming, adopted by the Economic and Social Council at the coordination segment of its 1997 substantive session. It also emphasized targeted, women-specific activities undertaken at the national and international levels to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Noting that the report of the Secretary-General (E/1997/66) and the Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2 were primarily concerned with gender mainstreaming at the intergovernmental and institutional levels, it suggested that, in addition, increased attention should be paid to supporting and monitoring the implementation of gender mainstreaming policies at the national level.[2]

8. The General Assembly, in its resolution 52/100 of 12 December 1997, welcomed the adoption by the Council of agreed conclusions 1997/2 and endorsed the definition, set of principles and specific recommendations for gender mainstreaming which they contained. It directed its committees and other bodies to mainstream the gender perspective systematically into all areas of their work and requested the Secretariat to present issues and approaches in a gender-sensitive manner when preparing reports so as to provide the intergovernmental machinery with an analytical basis for gender-responsive policy formulation. It requested the Council to ensure that gender mainstreaming would be an integral part of all its activities concerning integrated follow-up to recent United Nations conferences, building upon its agreed conclusions 1997/2.

9. The Assembly also initiated a process for conducting in the year 2000 a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and of the Platform for Action. In that regard, it decided that the Commission on the Status of Women would serve as the preparatory committee for a high-level plenary review. Based on a report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/1998/10), it requested the Commission to consider, at its forty-second session, options for conducting such a review and to take appropriate action for its preparations.

2. Economic and Social Council, substantive session of 1998, operational activities segment

10. Building upon the Platform for Action and General Assembly resolutions 50/203 and 51/69, the Council decided at its resumed substantive session on 18 December 1997 to consider at its 1998 operational activities segment the topic of "Advancement of women: implementation of the Platform for Action and the role of operational activities in promoting in particular capacity-building and resource mobilization for enhancing the participation of women in development". Consideration of the topic coincides with the Council's and the Assembly's regular triennial policy review of operational activities.

11. The Council's consideration of the topic is expected to benefit from recent developments. For example, since the adoption of the Platform for Action, a number of operational entities have strengthened a two-pronged approach in support of governmental activities to achieve gender equality at the national level. This includes increased support for targeted, women-specific activities and explicit attention to the impact of all development activities on women and men, separately, so as to strengthen the gender mainstreaming approach. Recent reports to the three-tiered intergovernmental machinery[3] have provided ongoing updates about these efforts.

12. The consideration by the Second Committee of the General Assembly of a biannual item on women in development has for a number of years provided a framework for highlighting the relevance of gender issues in mainstream economic and development discussions.[4] The Assembly's resolution 52/195, on women in development, adopted on 18 December 1997, emphasized the need for a higher proportion of development resources to reach women, in particular women in rural and remote areas. Moreover, the Council's own agreed conclusions on gender mainstreaming also provide guidance on the implementation of operational activities to benefit women fully.

13. In addition, the system-wide medium-term plans for the advancement of women 1990-1995 (E/1987/52) and 1996-2001 (E/1996/16) provided a framework for the system-wide implementation of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women[5] and the Platform for Action, including operational activities. The Commission at its forty-second session and the Council at its 1998 substantive session will conduct a comprehensive mid-term review of the current plan, based on a report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/1998/3).[6]

14. Other developments that are expected to feed into the Council's 1998 operational activities segment include the work of the Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, including a workshop on gender mainstreaming.[7] The capacity of national machinery for the advancement of women to act as a catalyst for gender mainstreaming and an advocate for operational activities benefiting women may be further explored and assessed. The operational activities segment, together with the critical area of concern on institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women to be considered by the Commission on the Status of Women in 1999, could make substantial progress in this regard.[8] The mid-term review of the System-wide Medium-term plan for the Advancement of Women includes a summary of operational activities being undertaken by the United Nations system, also contribute to this effort.

15. The Economic and Social Council's consideration of the topic of the advancement of women in its operational activities segment in 1998, while focusing on capacity building and resource mobilization, will provide an opportunity for synthesizing a wealth of knowledge on best practices for enhancing women's participation in development. It should enable the Council, and subsequently the Assembly, to provide clear policy guidance on how

operational activities as a whole could more effectively contribute to the realization of gender equality. In this regard, all efforts should be made to ensure that the United Nations Development Assistance Framework which is currently under preparation fully reflects a gender perspective and provides an appropriate basis for enhancing women's participation in development.

16. Any comments that the Commission as a whole or individual members in their statements may make on the plan or on the Council's operational activities segment would provide valuable input into the preparations of the documentation for the item.

B. Activities in support of mainstreaming a gender perspective into the work of the United Nations system

17. The Secretary-General conveyed agreed conclusions 1997/2 on gender mainstreaming, adopted by the Economic and Social Council, to all heads of departments, funds, programmes and regional commissions and to the heads of specialized agencies and international trade and financial institutions, stressing that gender mainstreaming was the responsibility of all staff and emphasizing the accountability of senior managers for implementation of the agreed conclusions. Senior managers were invited to take a number of steps, including the formulation of specific strategies for ensuring that gender issues were brought into the mainstream of activities of each senior manager's area of responsibility; the systematic use of gender analysis in the preparation of reports or in operational activities; and the preparation of medium-term plans and programme budgets in such a manner that a gender perspective was apparent. Furthermore, the Secretary-General invited the convenors of four executive committees to give due consideration to gender issues as part of their responsibilities.

18. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women briefed the Policy Coordination Group on 6 August 1997 on gender mainstreaming. She emphasized the practical implications of the agreed conclusions for the work of the Secretariat and is cooperating with senior managers as they take steps to implement them. She held follow-up meetings with two entities, the Department of Political Affairs and the Office of Internal Oversight Services, to discuss practical steps that could be taken within their areas of responsibility. An additional 14 entities (the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Populations Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the World Meteorological Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Intellectual Property Organization, the World Trade organization (WTO), the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, the International Trade Centre of UNCTAD/WTO, the World Bank and the Office of Legal Affairs, United Nations Secretariat) have notified the Secretary-General or his Special Adviser of their commitment to gender mainstreaming. Two of them, UNFPA and UNCHS (Habitat), provided detailed accounts on how gender considerations are reflected throughout their work. Certain organizations that in the past had not actively participated in system-wide activities on women and gender issues (such as, for example, WIPO and WMO) have expressed their support for gender mainstreaming and their intention to make gender issues a priority concern in their work.

19. The Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs held a discussion on gender mainstreaming on 15 January 1998 and is endeavouring to address gender aspects systematically in all of its areas of responsibility. The Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs has devoted considerable time and attention to gender issues in Afghanistan, with a view to developing a consistent basis for United Nations activities in that country. It may be anticipated that the experience gained in that particular case will provide important lessons in shaping other current and future humanitarian assistance activities to explicitly incorporate gender considerations.

20. The President of the Economic and Social Council has undertaken a number of efforts to draw the attention of intergovernmental bodies to the Council's agreed conclusions on gender mainstreaming. He conveyed the agreed conclusions to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session so that they might be drawn to the attention of the chairpersons of the Main Committees and bodies of the Assembly. He also transmitted the agreed conclusions to the chairpersons of the functional commissions of the Council, seeking their active cooperation and support in their implementation and inviting them to provide information either to the President of the Council or to the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women on steps taken to implement the agreed conclusions and of any obstacle or difficulty encountered in that process.

21. Noting that the agreed conclusions entrust the Council's Bureau with establishing a dialogue with and

among the Bureaus of the subsidiary bodies, he initiated consultations with the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women, to facilitate such a dialogue. He also invited all chairpersons of functional commissions, including the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women, to give consideration to having a standing agenda item on follow-up to the agreed conclusions of the Council's high-level and coordination segments and to its resolutions as part of the agenda of the Commission. He referred in particular to the Council's agreed conclusions and guidance to functional commissions in such areas as poverty eradication and gender mainstreaming. The Commission may wish to consider this suggestion.

22. A number of recent intergovernmental decisions[9] emphasized that system-wide gender mainstreaming must form an integral part of all conference follow-up. In that regard, it will be recalled that the Council decided to convene a session on integrated follow-up to United Nations conferences from 13 to 15 May (tentative) 1998. The Secretariat of the Commission is making efforts to ensure that in the framework of ACC preparations for the event, follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and the mainstreaming of a gender perspective are fully reflected. Similarly, it is anticipated that participation by, and contributions of, the Commission on the Status of Women will be fully reflected in the arrangements for the session.

23. As of 1 January 1998, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, of which the Division for the Advancement of Women is a part, has become the new organizational structure of the Secretariat covering economic and social issues. The Secretary-General's bulletin establishing the organizational structure of the Department emphasizes, among other functions, the Department "monitors, analyses and assesses, from a global as well as a gender perspective, economic and social policies and trends, including population trends ...".[10] The responsibility of the Department as a whole for gender mainstreaming has thus been clearly established. The internal reorganization of the new Department has included the reassignment to the Division of staff from the former Department for Development Support and Management Services, with responsibilities for technical cooperation activities. While continuing to implement existing intergovernmental mandates, this reorganization will allow for a more focused provision of policy advisory services to Governments, at their request, on gender issues and the advancement of women, including the human rights of women.

24. The Division for the Advancement of Women has continued to provide comments and inputs to reports prepared by other parts of the United Nations Secretariat in an effort to strengthen attention to gender issues. In this regard, emphasis is placed on providing input at an early stage of the research and drafting process so that gender consideration might influence the approach taken in a report, rather than being retroactively incorporated at a final stage. Considerably more effort is, however, required to support other departments and entities as they start to put in place steps and mechanisms that will, over time, lead to systematic attention to gender issues in all areas. Since the recognition of the relevance of gender in areas as diverse as macroeconomics, international trade, humanitarian affairs and poverty eradication has increased at an unexpected pace over the past several months, the level of expectation for support, backstopping and advice from the Special Adviser and the Division cannot be absorbed within the resources available to the Division. The Special Adviser has thus initiated an effort to seek extrabudgetary resources to complement the resources available to her.

25. Cooperation continued between the Division, UNIFEM and INSTRAW on the joint project WomenWatch, a United Nations Internet site on the advancement and empowerment of women. The usefulness of the site is confirmed by the above-average number of queries it registers when compared to other United Nations sites. Plans are now under way to expand participation on the site to other United Nations entities so as to realize the goal of establishing a gateway for all gender-related information and activities available in the United Nations system. While a limited amount of resources from the regular budget are allocated for this project, additional resources from extrabudgetary sources are needed to maintain and expand the site and to provide a limited amount of training to various user groups on electronic networking technology.

C. ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality

26. The ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality held its second session in New York on 5-6 March 1997. An oral report on the meeting was made to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-first session by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, who chairs the Committee. The Committee submitted five principles to the ACC for endorsement and invited ACC to request the issuance of administrative instructions or similar action by all members of ACC to ensure that gender mainstreaming is consistently implemented by all departments and organizations of the system and by all staff in all areas, in

keeping with the Beijing Platform for Action. The Committee also invited the ACC, in its consideration of peacekeeping, rehabilitation and development at its first regular session of 1997, to recognize the need to mainstream a gender perspective in those areas. It also noted that particular efforts were needed to ensure that women were not disproportionately affected by any reorganization/retrenchment within the United Nations system and emphasized the crucial role of gender units/gender focal points.

27. ACC, in its discussion of peace-building at its first regular session of 1997, recognized the need for mainstreaming a gender perspective in all activities undertaken by the United Nations system in the areas of peacekeeping, peace-building, reconciliation, reconstruction, rehabilitation and development (ACC/1997/4, para. 36). As to the use of strategic frameworks for responding to and recovering from crisis, ACC underlined that a gender perspective needed to be taken into account. Subsequently, particular attention was devoted to gender issues in the case of Afghanistan.

28. In reviewing progress in coordinated follow-up to international conferences, ACC also focused on the work of the Inter-Agency Committee, requesting it to complete the preparation of an advocacy statement on the mainstreaming of a gender perspective throughout the United Nations system. At its second session in 1997, ACC requested its subsidiary machinery, particularly the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable development, the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions, and the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, to further develop and strengthen dialogue and interaction in integrated conference follow-up.

29. Following its discussions, the Committee established an intersessional group on gender mainstreaming, to be convened by its chairperson; supported the proposal for a workshop on gender mainstreaming with the OECD/DAC Expert Group on Women in Development; and decided to assess the gender dimension of activities in the United Nations system to develop statistics and indicators and qualitative data for monitoring follow-up to recent global United Nations conferences. The Committee also decided to elaborate guidelines for budgeting processes and the coding of budgets in order to monitor the use of resources for gender equality. It was further agreed to monitor the inclusion of gender considerations by the three ACC Task Forces for integrated conference follow-up and to prepare proposals on ways of strengthening coordination between the Committee and the Gender Advisory Board to the Commission on Science and Technology for Development.

30. A workshop on gender mainstreaming was held at the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva from 15 to 17 September 1997. It was organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women, using extrabudgetary resources provided for the purpose. The workshop was attended by 61 members of the OECD/DAC Expert Group on Women in Development and by focal points on gender in the United Nations system.

31. The workshop considered that the Platform for Action and agreed conclusions 1997/2 on gender mainstreaming had set a high standard. It was stressed that gender equality was not only a goal in itself but also a means to make poverty reduction, the promotion of human rights, and democratization more effective by addressing the needs of both men and women. There was need to commit greater human, technical and financial resources to the task of ensuring that a gender equality perspective is fully institutionalized. Three primary conditions were identified as having special significance for that effort: commitment, competence and compliance. There was also agreement to continue the professional exchange and flow of information through e-mail and the Internet, *inter alia*. The Inter-Agency Committee and the OECD/DAC Expert Group would develop partnerships to prioritize future joint activities such as meetings on selected topics, exchange of information on best practices, documentation of sectoral approaches to be used for training and policy dialogue, and consideration of further multilateral or bilateral field-level collaboration on gender mainstreaming involving civil society and partner Governments. With regard to capacity-building, the workshop suggested a review of the role and terms of reference of gender focal points in all agencies and organizations.

32. The Chairperson held several informal meetings of the Committee during the year, in Addis Ababa, Geneva and in New York. The various working groups prepared reports for presentation to the Committee at its third session, to be held in New York on 25-27 February 1998. The Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session will be briefed orally by the Chairperson on the outcome of the third session of the Committee.

33. UNIFEM, as liaison between the Committee and the ACC Task Force on Conference Follow-up, represented the Committee at the Inter-Agency Workshop on Field-level Follow-up to Global Conferences, held in Turin from 10 to 12 December 1997. Six resident representatives and other field-level staff attended the Workshop, *inter alia*, to provide field-based experience on conference follow-up. The objective was to develop a coherent, integrated message to

the resident coordinator system on operationalization of a coordinated follow-up process at the country level.

34. Issues discussed at Turin included gender mainstreaming; human rights; development of indicators; incorporation of regional and subregional perspectives in conference follow-up; training; participation by the Bretton Woods institutions, civil society and bilaterals in conference follow-up; and streamlining of reporting. With regard to gender mainstreaming, the following recommendations were made:

(a) Women's empowerment and gender equality strategies should be incorporated into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) country strategy notes;

(b) Data disaggregated by sex should be gathered and packaged;

(c) Full use should be made of the expertise of gender focal points and of UNIFEM, the Division for the Advancement of Women and INSTRAW;

(d) Inter-agency thematic groups on gender should be convened at the field level;

(e) Competence and capacity in gender-responsive programming should be built among United Nations staff and partners;

(f) Non-governmental organizations and national machineries for women working on post-conference strategies should be consulted and provided with financial support;

(g) Ways in which United Nations agencies support women's human rights and work for the elimination of violence against women should be improved and better coordinated.

35. The Inter-Agency Workshop also recommended that:

(a) The Inter-Agency Committee produce a brochure of practical measures to mainstream gender and circulate it widely to the resident coordinators;

(b) Best practices on women's empowerment, gender mainstreaming and achieving gender equality be featured on the WomenWatch Internet site;

(c) Consideration be given to undertaking pilot projects that look at cross-cutting approaches to gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment;

(d) Resident coordinators be invited to attend meetings of the Committee in order to engage in dialogue on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, as seen from the field level.

36. At an informal meeting of the Inter-Agency Committee in December 1997 to prepare for the third session, the Chairperson briefed the Committee on the Inter-Agency Gender Mission to Afghanistan which she had led from 12 to 24 November 1997. The Mission, which was composed of representatives of WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, WFP and ESCWA, reported on the gender situation in Afghanistan and proposed practical field-oriented guidelines and indicators for use by agency field staff working in Afghanistan to address gender concerns in assistance programmes within the framework of the principle-centred approach adopted by the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs in June 1997.

D. Reported follow-up by non-governmental organizations

37. Since the issuance of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/52/281), a number of events have occurred at the international, regional and national levels under the auspices of non-governmental organizations.

38. Among the events at the international level was a one-day workshop held on 18 July 1997 in Zambia. The workshop was organized by the Non-Governmental Organizations' Coordinating Committee and funded by the UNFPA to discuss United Nations conferences held between 1992 and July 1997 and their follow-up strategies, with particular attention to equality between women and men. Another meeting, entitled "Strategic Planning Meeting on Women's Human Rights", was held from 29 September to 5 October 1997 in Harare, Zimbabwe. It was organized by Women in Law and Development in Africa, which sponsored it jointly with the Centre for Women's Global Leadership, Comite Interamericano de Mujeres Activistas, International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia and Pacific, Women's Rights Project-Human Rights Watch and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Women's human rights advocates from all over the world participated and discussed development of forward-looking collaborative actions.

39. At the regional level, the Regional Conference on Gender and Communication Policy took place in the Philippines from 30 July to 2 August 1997. The Conference was coordinated by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) and ISIS International Manila to discuss policy recommendations on media issues. The participants included media practitioners and activists from

Australia, Canada, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The Inter-American Development Bank organized a two-day meeting in October 1997 in Washington, D.C., on domestic violence against women in Latin America and the Caribbean at which various North and South American non-governmental organizations examined the latest approaches to measuring the cost of domestic violence. The Commonwealth Medical Association organized a meeting in London from 14 to 16 November 1997 to discuss indicators for measuring women's health status in a human rights context. Non-governmental organizations active at the country level participated in a West African subregional meeting organized by ECA on 27-28 November 1997 to discuss with government officials strategies to develop women's caucuses as a tool for influencing political decision-making processes.

40. Non-governmental organizations have also been active in advocacy work to promote equality between women and men at the national level. The South Africa National NGO Coalition organized a National Men's March against Violence against Women and Children and a rally of women and children in Pretoria on 22 November 1997 in connection with the International Day to Stop Violence Against Women. The National Association of University Women from Romania and the World Trade Centre Bucharest were reported to have held jointly a national forum of women and other non-governmental organizations from 28 to 30 November 1997. Issues discussed at the forum included strategies to achieve equal opportunities for men and women.

41. Non-governmental organizations and women's groups have been following activities since the Fourth World Conference and sharing their information. Various publications and regular newsletters carry relevant articles. For example, the International Women's Tribune Centre recently issued its 100th Global Faxnet (a.k.a. "Globalnet" via Internet), an information sheet on follow-up activities which reaches a large number of non-governmental organizations worldwide. The Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) continued to monitor the progress made by countries in developing national action plans and updated its own publication on the subject in September 1997. WEDO plans to publish its second annual report on progress in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in March 1998.

42. Several other events were scheduled to take place between November 1997 and March 1998. The Women's Caucus for Gender Justice with respect to the International Criminal Court (ICC) was set up as a result of a meeting of non-governmental organizations in 1995 to advocate for an effective ICC. It met several times in 1997. Certain international child rights and human rights activists with particular concern for the exploitation of young girls are coordinating their efforts to organize a global march against child labour, in order to raise public awareness. The march will combine local and global walks and caravans taking place all over the world beginning in January 1998 and ending in June in Geneva.

III. Reports prepared in accordance with specific mandates

A. Situation of Palestinian women and assistance provided by organizations of the United Nations system

43. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1997/16 on Palestinian women, expressed its concern about the continuing difficult situation of Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all available means, and to submit to the Commission, at its forty-second session, a report on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

44. The Commission on the Status of Women has monitored regularly the situation of Palestinian women and children as stipulated in paragraph 260 of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. Following the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-government Arrangements by the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (1993) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), the United Nations system has provided increased support to Palestinian women. The status of the human rights of Palestinian women and recent social, economic and legal developments which have occurred in the period under review (1997) and their gender impact are detailed in document E/CN.6/1998/2/Add.2.

B. Release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflicts and imprisoned

45. The Commission on the Status of Women, at its forty-first session, adopted resolution 41/1, on the release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflicts, including those subsequently imprisoned. The Commission

requested the Secretary-General "to prepare, taking into account the information provided by States and relevant international organizations, a report on the implementation of the present resolution, for submission to the Commission on the Status at its forty-second session". A note verbale was sent to 184 Member States on 11 September 1997; as of 15 December, the Secretariat had received six replies.

46. The Governments of Nicaragua and Panama reported that the situation described in resolution 41/1 did not exist in their respective countries. The Government of Panama noted, however, that children and women must be given special treatment and be protected from any kind of detention, arrest or imprisonment and that, in cases of armed conflict, the parties must take the steps necessary to ensure that children are housed separately from adults, except in the case of families whose members are housed together. The Government of El Salvador indicated that it supported any initiative that would promote the values of international humanitarian law and paid tribute to the Secretariat for following up on resolutions such as resolution 41/1. The Government of the Philippines indicated that it strongly supported and endorsed the resolution. The Sultanate of Oman reported that there was no available information in Oman with regard to the matter.

47. The State Commission of the Azerbaijani Republic for Prisoners of War, Hostages and Missing Persons reported that during the recent war, the Armenian armed forces had taken hostage approximately 100 children, 442 women and 370 elderly people. Efforts of the State Commission resulted in the release from Armenian captivity of 40 children, 126 women and 115 elderly people. The majority had been in captivity for more than two years. At the current time, 4,858 citizens of Azerbaijan were counted as missing, including 60 children, 316 women and 254 elderly people. According to information available, 92 of that number were still in Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh.

48. The Secretariat also requested information from relevant entities of the United Nations system; as of 15 December, it had received four replies. Three respondents, including the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ECSWA), indicated that there was no available information on the issue. The Department of Peace-keeping Operations provided information from the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT) which reported that since its inception one relevant case had been registered. During a hostage crisis in February of 1997, three women (one staff member of the International Committee of the Red Cross and two Russian journalists) had been taken hostage, in addition to the United Nations staff. All hostages were subsequently released. The Mission had not registered any other cases of women or children taken hostage in Tajikistan, which did not preclude that such incidents might have occurred without the knowledge of UNMOT or other international agencies. UNMOT also reported that 20 people were currently being held in Tajikistan by different uncontrolled armed groups. Allegedly, two women were among those kept in captivity, the mother and sister of local warlords, but UNMOT was not in a position to confirm the information.

Notes

[1] See, for example, E/CN.6/1997/2, paras. 48-59.

[2] A/52/281, paras. 13 and 14.

[3] See, for example, E/1997/64, and A/52/281.

[4] The Secretary-General's report to the Assembly at its fifty-second session under item 97 (g) focused on mainstreaming a gender perspective into economic policies and proposed a preliminary framework for action (A/52/345).

[5] *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

[6] Council resolutions 1996/6 and 1996/34.

[7] The Workshop on Gender Mainstreaming was held from 15 to 17 September 1997 at Geneva. It brought together members of the Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality and the Expert Group on Women and Development of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC). The meeting was organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women.

[8] See also the recommendation contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/281, para. 14) that progress in gender mainstreaming at the national level should be at the core of the Commission's discussion area IV H in 1999.

[9] For example, the Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2, its resolution 1997/61, and General Assembly resolution 52/100.

[10] ST/SGB/1997/9, para. 2.1 (e).